

News Release

French Student Conducts Research with Associate Professor Ian MacRae at the Northwest Research and Outreach Center

By Itolles on Thursday, August 18, 2011



Joseph Duhamel, a student from outside of Rouen in the region of Normandy, France, completed his agriculture internship by conducting research on soybean aphids at the Northwest Research and Outreach Center (NWROC). He worked under the supervision of Extension Entomologist Ian MacRae. Duhamel is a fourth year student from *École d'Ingénieurs en Agriculture* (Esitpa), the school of engineering in agriculture in Rouen.

Duhamel was one of two students from Esitpa who spent the summer months completing research internships in Minnesota. A fellow student worked with the West Central Research and Outreach Center in Morris, Minn. Both students arrived in early June as part of an emerging exchange program between the University of Minnesota, Crookston and Esitpa; they will return to France at the beginning of September.

This summer was Duhamel's first experience in the United States. He chose the University of Minnesota for the completion of his required internship because he wanted the opportunity to study in an English speaking country. Working at the NWROC fulfilled a required component of his internship to develop and perform research. He has previous research experience working with agro forestry for five weeks in India, but that process was more about theory and did not include anything practical. At the U of M, Crookston, he is engaged in hands-on research, something he enjoys.

Under the direction of MacRae, Duhamel designed an experiment to test the effectiveness of various insecticides on controlling soybean aphids. He was responsible for carrying out the experiment through sampling and coordinating the collection of data. The final process was analysis of results. MacRae explained that a chemical trial was a great project for Duhamel as it served as a relatively simple model on which to learn about research. MacRae also commented on how Duhamel's past experiences were evident during his time with NWROC, "Joe came with a lot of knowledge and was able to hit the ground running." MacRae was pleased with Duhamel's contributions this summer adding that he was a great addition to the crew.



Working with the effects of insecticides on soybean aphids was not the only project that kept Duhamel busy this summer. He also assisted with a project examining the management of the pesticide-resistant potato beetle. While at NWROC he expanded his research knowledge base and will be returning to France with a greater understanding of the agricultural processes in the United States.



During his time in fields, Duhamel noticed both differences and similarities between France and the United States. He grew up in a small village half an hour from Rouen in the deep countryside of the hills of Normandy. He considers himself "almost a farm kid," since he lived right next to a farm where cows grazing in the pasture was an everyday occurrence. This past experience helped Duhamel understand farming in Minnesota, "All that is going on around Crookston makes sense to me," explains Duhamel.

Something different for Duhamel was the scale of agriculture in the area. He was impressed by the tractors, fields, and crop planes, noting that everything here is big compared to his home country. In Europe, farming is very intensive because of the small amount of agricultural land available to support the population. For this reason, soil nutrient management and chemical laws that are a hot topic in the United States now were being addressed by Europe several years earlier.

Once he overcame the initial culture shock, living in rural Minnesota for the summer allowed Duhamel the opportunity to experience the true "Minnesota nice." He noted that there were always people waving at the research crew when they were out on the road. During trips to research plots across the state, he was able to experience long drives on straight roads. He described this experience as really American compared to travel on the winding roads through France.



Upon his arrival in Minneapolis, Minn., his first experience in an American city, Duhamel admitted he was surprised the city was laid out with the roads and buildings in perfectly straight lines. In Duhamel's opinion, it was something that looked like it was straight out of a Hollywood movie, "I kept thinking to myself where are the cameras?" commented Duhamel with a laugh.

While Crookston is a farming community he can relate to, there were items from home he occasionally missed aside from family and friends. French bread was something he could not find a replacement for in rural Minnesota. He also found himself missing the traditional French cheese, which most people describe as "smelly cheese," but Duhamel contests its name should be "tasty cheese" instead.

Surrounded by the flat prairie of the Red River Valley, Duhamel also found himself longing for the traditional Normandy picture of cows grazing on the hillsides. Occasionally traveling south to Morris to visit his fellow French student allowed Duhamel some opportunities to see rolling hills dotted with livestock. Other excursions around Minnesota included two different canoe trips. One of the things he noted from his time on the river was the amount of wildlife, something he does not see as much of in his home country.

Duhamel was grateful for his time in Crookston and reflects that while he was not used to the American way of life, it was a nice change of pace for the summer months. As he returns home to France, he will be completing his final year of studies. His future plans include another internship, this time working with organic farming. Afterwards he would like to work with extension services in France as he affirms, "I want to work with the farmers." Looking into the future, there is also the potential for Duhamel to start a farm of his own.

Educational and career goals aside, Duhamel will continue to travel. With India, Poland, and now the United States under his belt, next on his list of destinations is Russia. Duhamel shared that he really enjoyed how he was able to feel the spirit of the world while in the United States, and it is a spirit he will continue to encounter beyond the fields of the Red River Valley.

Today the University of Minnesota, Crookston delivers 29 bachelor's degree programs, 18 minors, and more than 40 concentrations, including 10 online degrees, in the areas of agriculture and natural resources; business; liberal arts and education; and math, science and technology. With an enrollment of about 1,450 undergraduates from more than 25 countries and 40 states, the Crookston campus offers a supportive, close-knit atmosphere that leads to a prestigious University of Minnesota degree. "Small Campus. Big Degree." To learn more, visit [www.umcrookston.edu](http://www.umcrookston.edu).

In the photos:

Top, left: Joseph Duhamel (left) from Rouen, France served as a research assistant at the Northwest Research and Outreach Center under the supervision of research entomologist Ian MacRae.

Center, right: Associate Professor Ian MacRae (left) and research assistant Joseph Duhamel search for aphids on a soybean plant in the research plot located west of the U of M, Crookston.

Lower, left: Duhamel examines a soybean leaf for aphids.

Bottom, right: Duhamel, from Rouen, France, designed and conducted an experiment to test the effectiveness of various insecticides on controlling soybean aphids, the number one insect pest of soybeans.

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